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PREPARATION for DEATH,

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Recommended in

A LETTER to a MALEFACTOR;

But Useful for all sorts of People.



Sept. 7. 1690.

Mr. L

I Had really a kindness for you, because I had good hopes of you, that you might become a good Man, if it pleased God to prolong your Life; and therefore have done already what I can for you, and shall be ready to do more, if it please God to give any opportunity. But because I find your Case very dangerous in that respect, considering what hath been sworn against you, and that this is not the first Fault, and there being great Complaints to the Privy Council of the frequent Crimes that are committed of that kind; insomuch that the Judge, who is a very good Man, and as tender of the Life of a Man, as is consistent with his Duty, cannot shew you that Favour that otherwise he would, the greatest Kindness that I can do you, is, to instruct you how to improve your present Circumstances, which if you accordingly do, it will be ten thousand times better than Life it self. You must therefore know that *the Great Business and End of our mortal Life* in the Flesh is to work the Creature by various Exercises to an entire Subjection to the Great, Glorious, and most Excellent Creator; who

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is the Father of Spirits, and hath not only a just and absolute Right and Dominion over us by Creation, Sustainment and Redemption, but is in himself of so transcendent Excellence, and so unconceivably Good and Gracious to his poor despicable Creatures (whereof the Love of Parents to their Children is but a little Representation) that even Prudence and Gratitude, if it was well considered, would effectually prevail with a Man of Sense to seek his Favour, though by the most Absolute Subjection that can be conceived, were we not obliged to it by his Absolute Dominion, and subject to his Irresistible Power. And so that this entire Subjection be but effectually wrought in us, it matters not whether our Life be long or short : Be it never so short, if the Work be but perfectly done, it is the same thing as if it was longer ; nay, in some respects better ; for then it is secure ; whereas till then it is in danger ; only we are in the Hands of a Faithful Creator, and have continual Occasion of Exercise of our Dependence upon him. Now to come to *your particular Case* : It seems you have ran a Course directly contrary ; instead of exercising your self to this Subjection, you perhaps have never in your Life been sensible of any such Work you had to do ; and not only not done any thing toward it, but done the quite contrary ; instead of subjecting your Sensual Appetites to your Reason (which is the first part of this Exercise, and what all Mankind must account for) you have subjected the Man to the Beast in you, and abused your natural Faculties and Powers to serve and satisfy your Animal Affections ; and instead of subjecting your Will to the Holy and Righteous External Declarations of the Will of God ; you have yielded to the secret Motions of the Apostate Spirits in your Animal Affections in Disobedience and Rebellion against that Holy Will of God. And by this means instead of promoting the great Business of your Life, you have run your self into a worse condition than when you were born and first began to live ; so that thus much of your Life is not only lost, but mis-spent to your own Damage. And now to recover all again, and perfect this great Work, for which you had a longer Life assign'd you, in so short a time as is now allowed you, you may think very
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hard, if not impossible. But be of good comfort : Where Sin hath abounded, Grace hath much more abounded. God is able to do greater matters than this, if he be graciously so pleased, in less time ; but then you must seek to him, and do what you can to prepare your self for his Grace, and to be ready to cooperate with it faithfully. To this end you must endeavour to banish all thoughts of this World, and even of your Temporal Life it self, and enter into serious Consideration of the Great and Glorious Majesty of God, who by his Wisdom and Power hath Created and Governs the whole Universe, whereof the whole Earth in respect of the rest is but as a drop of a Bucket, and in respect of him as nothing ; and then consider with your self, what a despicable thing you are in comparison of the Earth and all its Inhabitants, which yet altogether is so little as I have said in respect of Almighty God ; so despicable, if you were innocent and righteous ; and therefore that you should be so infatuated as to dare to transgress the least of his Commands, doth justly deserve not only Temporal Death, and to be cut off from the Children of Men, to whom you have been an Enemy, and Confederated with the Enemies of their Peace and Quiet, but Eternal Damnation, and to be for ever separated from his Glorious Presence, against whom you have rebelled, and to have your part with those Apostate Spirits, whose Motions you have obeyed, in eternal Misery. And never cease musing and considering these great and plain Truths, and lifting up your Heart to God with fervent Desires and Prayers, that he will condescend to give you Grace, to enlighten your Mind, and mollifie your Heart with a deep Sense of your miserable Condition, till you find your self so affected and concerned for the Favour of God and the Salvation of your Soul, that all Concern and Thought for your Temporal Life, as an inconsiderable thing in respect of that, may wholly cease ; and that your Soul be mightily humbled with a deep Sense of your utter unworthiness, that that Great and Glorious and most Holy Majesty should have any regard to so despicable and so sinful a Wretch, with great Indignation against your Sin and Madnes, and against those cursed Apostate Spirits, which by their se-

cret Impressions have pressed you on into all this Wickedness and Mischief. When you have gotten thus far, those wicked Spirits, when they find they can no longer keep you in Darkness and Impenitence, will strive to thrust you headlong into Despair, and possess you with dreadful Apprehensions of the Holiness, Justice, and Severity of God. And therefore you must further know, that this Great and Glorious Majesty, though most Holy, Righteous and Terrible to the Impenitent and Incurable, yet is of unconceivable Mercy, Clemency and Goodness to truly humble and penitent Sinners: And though he be a God of such Holiness and Purity that there is no immediate Access to him for such despicable and polluted Creatures as the Children of Men, yet hath he in his great Mercy and Wisdom provided a most admirable Expedient, whereby we may have access to him at all times with Confidence and Assurance of Acceptance; and not only Pardon of Sin, but Grace also, and Divine Power to serve him acceptably. And this is by Christ Jesus, God and Man united in one Person, who having run the same Race and Exercise of Subjection by Obedience even to Death, and the most shameful Death, the Death of the Cross, and thereby obtained Favour for us with the Father, him hath God exalted to be Judge both of Quick and Dead, and to be a Prince and a Saviour to all that obey him, and are united to him by his Spirit residing and ruling in their Hearts. Him hath God proposed to be a Propitiation for us by his Passion and Death, and raised up to be a Mediator and an Advocate for us with him in Heaven; and by him, and in his Name, all who are Seal'd with, and Partakers of his Spirit, have Access and certain Acceptance with the Father. But that you may be one of these, here is again, as before, something to be done by you. You must ruminate much upon the admirable Clemency and Goodness of God to his poor Creatures, for the recovery of them out of a most miserable Slavery to the Powers of Darkness; and how admirable a Person this Christ Jesus is, who having performed a perfect Obedience to the Father in our Nature, and by his Passion consecrated it, and exalted it to Heaven to be there as a Magnet to attract all who receive him, and give

give up themselves to obey him: And how great a new Obligation this is upon us to do so: How great and admirable the Benefit and Advantage is to our selves: And therefore how much common Prudence and Gratitude should prevail with you for that purpose. And never cease musing and thinking thereupon, and lifting up your Heart to God in earnest Desires and Prayers in the Name of Christ Jesus, and for his Sake, that he will be pleased to enlighten your Mind with a clear understanding of these admirable Truths, and fill your Heart with such Love and Admiration of his Goodness so demonstrated in this admirable Person, that all things in this World, your Temporal Life in the Flesh, and all that you are or have, may appear to you, as in truth they are, very mean and despicable, and nothing valuable and desirable but Christ Jesus, and an inseparable Union with him; till you find your Heart so affected with these things, that you become intirely resigned in all things to the Will of God, be willing and even desirous to be Partaker of the Sufferings of that Holy and Innocent Person, which you have justly deserved, and with full purpose of Heart give up your self to an entire Subjection, Obedience and Service of the Holy Trinity, to whom you have been dedicated in your Baptism, to all Eternity. This is a great Work indeed; but God is able to do this, and more than we can ask or think, in less time than you have to prepare for it: And if he will be so gracious to you, you will be a happy Creature, and have reason to admire and bless his Holy Providence, and abundant Grace, which by so admirable Means hath brought you to it; and then you will have nothing more to do, but to perform some other Works of true Repentance, which I shall presently shew you, and wait upon God and stand ready for what-ever he shall call you to. These remaining Works of Repentance respect either the particular Persons you have wronged, or the State and your Country in general. To the particular Persons you must make Restitution as far as you are able, pray to God to make up what is wanting by his Grace and Blessing to them, and send to them and desire their Pardon; and heartily forgive all who have injured you, acknowledging them, what-ever they intended,

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to have been God's Instruments for your just Punishment and Correction, and pray heartily to God to pardon them. And to the State and your Country you must do what you can to make Satisfaction and Restitution by these means: You must do what you can to break those wicked Combinations, Confederations and Practices, by making all the Discovery you can both of Robberies and such like Practices, and of the Persons who either use such Practices, or harbor, or are any way Partners with them therein. Only thus much I shall advise you, that you do it in Charity, not only to your Country, but even to the Malefactors themselves, so as that they may be reclaimed if possible; and therefore do it not to any one, but to such as you think most like to use your Discoveries wisely and charitably, with due care and respect even to them. And if you desire my Assistance therein, I will endeavour to come to you on purpose, rather than you shall want Assistance. I have no more now but my Prayers for you to Almighty God, that he will bless these Instructions, make them effectual upon you, and by his powerful Grace perfect this great and good Work in your Soul.

P O S T S C R I P T.

IT is a *common Opinion among Malefactors*, that it is a *dishonourable* thing, and therefore odious and detestable, *to discover*, (which they call betraying) *their Companions or Partners in their Crimes*. But this is plainly a mere vulgar Error, and a gross Mistake, and no less pernicious to themselves, and to their Partners, than to their Country, and Mankind in General. The *Fallacy* lies in the Misapplication of a true Principle. For the true reason why Breach of Faith and Betraying of Trust is so odious a thing among all Men, is, because it is not only injurious to the Person, but tends to the disturbance of Humane Society: So that if it was generally practis'd, Men would not know how to deal one with another, and would be deprived of mutual Assistance in many cases, and of one of the greatest Comforts of Humane Life. But yet, as in many other Cases, that which in the General is unlawful, dishonourable and odious, (as the taking away the Life of a Man) may in a particular case, under some certain Circumstances, become a necessary and commendable Duty, (as the Condemnation and Execution of a Murderer, which is an Act both of Justice upon the Malefactor, and of Charity to the rest of Mankind, by preventing and discouraging other Murders) so it is in this: To dis-

discover a Secret committed to ones Trust, which may lawfully be concealed; but especially, to do it for ones own advantage, and to the prejudice of his Confident, is commonly reputed, and very justly, a very base, unmanly, dishonest and dishonourable thing. But when the Secret or Confidence is in a thing wicked and unjust, injurious to other Persons, and to the Society whereof a Man is a Member, as, to his Country; this is no such Secret as can honestly be concealed; because it is a Breach of Charity to the injured Persons, and a Violation of that Faith, which, by an antecedent and greater Obligation, is due to the whole Society, whereof he is a Member. Such mutual Confidences therefore are not properly Human Societies, but a kind of Confederacies of Enemies and Disturbers of the proper Society, Peace and Welfare of Men, tending to the Destruction thereof. And the Hypothesis upon which they are built is for the same reason plainly a Delusion, and probably a Stratagem of the Apostate Spirits and Enemies of Mankind, to strengthen their Party and Interest among Men; so that as on the one hand this is no such Trust, as it is dishonourable to any Person to break it, because it is a wicked thing to engage in it; so on the other hand it is a Breach of Faith and Duty to the Society not to break but conceal it, and thereby support a Confederacy of Enemies and Disturbers of the Peace of his Country; so that the Person, who conceals what he knows of that nature, becomes accessary, even after his Death, to all the Evils which are afterward committed, and might have been prevented by his Discovery. Besides an obstinate and wilful Concealment even to the Death, is not only a Confirmation of that particular wicked Confederacy wherein the Person is engaged, or any way concerned or acquainted, but tends mightily to harden others, and so to support all such wicked Confederacies in general. Whereas did such Persons, at least when apprehended, in their Affliction become serious, and not suffer themselves to be longer abused and imposed upon by such a vulgar Error and Diabolical Delusion, but consider well, judge rightly, and act accordingly, such wicked Confederacies could not subsist for want of mutual Confidence. Nor is such Concealment only injurious to divers other particular Persons, and a Violation of that Faith and Love, which all Men owe to their Country; but very pernicious, and of evil consequence to the Partners, and all other such Criminals; because it encourageth them to venture upon and persist in such Courses as involve them more and more in Sin, whereby they treasure up Wrath against the Day of Wrath; and expose them to all those temporal Evils, which usually first or last over-take them. Whereas by such a Discovery, as I have recommended, the Persons discovered might possibly be reclaimed and brought to Repentance, at least might be hindered from so much increasing their Score, which were better for them, though by an unnatural and otherwise untimely Death, than
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that they should longer protract a miserable Life here to the increase of their Misery hereafter. Nor is it less *pernicious to the Malefactor himself*. For as without true Repentance no Pardon can be expected with God : So whoever doth not all he can to make Restitution, and repair all the Evil and Damage he hath done, and to prevent all he can for the future, can be no true Penitent, holding still an implicit Confederacy at least, with wickedness. And as he can expect no Favour from God, so is he to be looked upon by Men, not as a Man of Honor in any respect, but as a reprobate, deluded, and hardened Wretch, an Enemy to Man-kind, and a Confederate with Death and Hell, and the Kingdom of Darkness ; an odious and detestable Creature, instead of being in the least honourable as he vainly fancied. That, which only is Honourable or Commendable in such Case, and the only true Wisdom, is, 1. To consider seriously the unreasonableness and wickedness of the Crime, till such consideration hath produced a just Indignation and Abhorrence of it. 2. To acknowledge ingenuously his own Folly and Impotence to yield to and be overcome by such a Temptation, what-ever it was, which induced him to it ; and not rather more manly to have born any hardships of a transitory human Life, than so basely to have violated the Order of the Divine Providence, which assigned those hardships for his Exercise, and the Laws of his Country. 3. To give Glory to God, acknowledging the Justice of his Punishment, and the special Providence of God, who hath brought him to it not only in Justice, but in Mercy too, to cut off his Sin, for Correction of his Miscarriages, and that he may not be condemned, with the World, if he truly and effectually repent, as is before directed. 4. To endeavour, as far as possible he can, to break all such Confederacies, and prevent all the Mischief which might otherwise be committed by a plain Discovery of all he knoweth. This indeed would be an Evidence of such a Change and Disposition of Mind, as is really valuable in the Judgment of all Good and Wise Men, and acceptable in the sight of Almighty God, and therefore truly Honourable with others, and the truest wisdom for himself.

What I have here said to Criminals is fit to be considered by all who have any knowledge of any such Crimes. That which they may fancy to be Faithfulness, or Charity, or Pity to Criminals, is a great Mistake and Delusion, and in truth Unfaithfulness and want of due regard to their Country. That Malefactors be brought to condign Punishment both Justice and Charity to our Country require ; which is to be preferred before the Consideration of any particular Person : And therefore to hinder, or refuse ones Assistance to it, is to prefer a Malefactor, and desert the Duty he owes his Country. But in other respects Charity and Humanity requires more to be done for them, than usually is with us.

